



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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President of the European Commission

**Statement by President Barroso following his meeting
with Mr Bidzina Ivanishvili, Prime Minister of Georgia**

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Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome Prime Minister Ivanishvili to the European Commission.

I had the opportunity to congratulate the Prime Minister on his recent electoral victory and to commend him for visiting us so soon after taking office. I see the Prime Minister's choice to visit Brussels in his first official trip abroad as a clear sign of Georgia's continued engagement with the European Union.

Georgia is a key member of our Eastern Partnership and the European Union is keen in bringing the country closer to the European Union.

The Prime Minister and I had a very open and fruitful exchange of views. We took stock of our bilateral relations and we discussed ways of forging even stronger ties. This is a shared goal and it is a goal that Georgia and the European Union want to achieve together.

I praise both Prime Minister Ivanishvili and President Saakashvili for the way in which they steered the transition to the new government. I take this occasion to urge all political actors in Georgia to continue using their leadership and statesmanship to maintain a constructive and responsible political atmosphere. I believe this is in the interest of Georgia and all Georgians.

The elections in Georgia were successfully held, and they were recognised as free and fair elections. But as we all know democracy goes beyond the Election Day. It is also the day after, and the upholding of democratic principles and rule of law on a daily basis. This is an indispensable condition for democracy. Democracy is about the rule of majority but also about the respect of minorities. Democracy is more than elections, it's the culture of political relations in a democratic environment.

In this respect, situations of 'selective justice' should be avoided as they could harm the country's image abroad and weaken rule of law. I have addressed this issue with the Prime Minister and he responded to me in a very concrete way.

The European Union remains deeply committed to work with Georgia on all these issues and to make substantial progress towards political association and economic integration. And the best way to achieve it is to conclude negotiations on an Association Agreement, including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area.

We have already closed several chapters in our Association Agreement negotiations; we are making real progress in the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area negotiations – and we hope that the pace of trade reforms in the country will allow us to finalise these negotiations in time for the 2013 Eastern Partnership Summit, in Vilnius, Lithuania. We are also moving forward in our visa liberalisation dialogue, which is another of the key features of our relations.

These are tangible achievements that can make a real change for Georgians and Europeans in general and I very much appreciate the Prime Minister's readiness to pursue these negotiations and the reforms that go with them. The Prime Minister gave me clear signs of his personal commitment to this agenda.

The EU is also committed to Georgia's territorial integrity. Through the Geneva International Discussions and the EU Monitoring Mission we play an important role in guaranteeing Georgia's security. We will remain an engaged partner in this front as well.

To conclude, let me thank again Prime Minister Ivanishvili for the frank and open discussions we had today and for his commitment to Georgia's relations with the European Union.

Mr Prime Minister, we look forward to work with your government in fulfilling the aspiration of all Georgians to seize a future of security, stability and prosperity. You can count on a steadfast friend and partner.

I thank you for your attention.